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BOOKS BY
MARTHA DICKINSON BIANCHI

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON
WITHIN THE HEDGE

THE CATHEDRAL

GABRIELE AND OTHER POEMS

RUSSIAN LYRICS AND COSSACK SONGS. *Translated*

THE WANDERING EROS

THE WANDERING EROS

Poems

BY

MARTHA DICKINSON BIANCHI



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TO
HARRIETTE

‘My songs are for those —
Who heap the couch of life with flowers
And line the grave with love.’



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(By permission of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John M. Tyler)	

*With torch high held,
A mounting flame
Lifted above the envious enmity
Of tempest
Or of cloud —
Eros the Wanderer strays.*

*His rushing wing
By palace guard unstayed
As heart most timorous barred from his approach;
His light step echoing nightingales of Thrace,
His lips with violet Sappho's kisses wet,
Across an unperceiving world
Where no strewn altars wait
Or rhythmic worshippers,
The pagan Wanderer wayward strays.*

*And whether down June gardens streaked with dawn,
The rosy rumour of his pinions backward blown,
Or dewy orchards at the night's high noon —
Across war's devastating plain
Or narrower passes of despair,*

*Where'er his golden sandals pause,
A glory as of star-sown space
Appears.*

*Impalpable Lingerer—'neath the moon
Beside some cottage lattice
Set ajar,
Where the night moth may find his flaring flower
Aware—
A Loiterer at twilight bars,
While fireflies sign their emulous loves
In fire on the dusk—
Nor eyes that seek nor hands that clasp
But catch diviner trouble
From that Wanderer,
In dreams
By human yearning stirred.*

*Terror and Joy implacable
He roves,
Unresting yet—
Through life and war and death,
His secret image on the soul
Proclaims him still
The Unknown Eros,*

*God of all gods desired,
The intolerable,
The Uncontrolled.*

*Beneath the radiant shadowing of his wings
Swift blindness falls—
The unbeholding sense to ashes burned
In his bright elements,
A mortal spark lit at immortal fires
To blaze its little instant
Deified,
Ere the oncoming dark.*

THE WANDERING EROS

TO EROS

I

EROS!

My youth, my vows, my Being unto thee
I fling! Would I were flame to tremble on beneath
Thy shrine forever!
As votive lights before the holiness of Saints.

Would I were heat of torrid tropics where the Sun
Is ultimate! That I might cast my smiting beams
Thy noon of passion—
Till shadowless Creation swooned before thy face!

Would I were fragrance of the sisterhood sweet-
breathed,
Of Jasmine, Lotus, Hyacinth—my chalice should
To thee be broken—
As laving for thy restless, wounding, wingéd feet!

Would I were lutes gold-throated, thrilling without
cease—

Would I were stars, thy luminous haunts to veil—
Amorous sleeping,
Eros, thou God of Gods! Giver of all Desire!

Alas!

No element of fire or Sun am I,
To bathe or glorify thy radiant haloed form
With power supernal—
Or to incite the condescension of a God.

Of earth conceived, divinity but haunts my heart
Through thee—yet am I flame, heat, fragrance, lute
and stars

For thy possessing—
Eros! transformed in Love's immortal mystery.

II

Eros, conceal thy face from me—
Never shall flame of mine compel
Thee up from sleep—breaking thy spell
To search thy fragile mystery!

Trembling I close my swooning eyes
To hide me from thy perfectness;
At thy desire withhold or bless—
Thy nearness vanquishes surmise.

I hear thy slender pointed wings
Poised, downward drooping unto me—

Folded in silent ecstasy
As Love aside his godship flings.

While darkness broods her alchemies
Lest thou allure the stars, as flowers
Their flashing loves, let Night our bowers
Enveil in soft obscurities.

Never shall doubt of mine disprove
Thy blindfold troth—at thy white will
Fly me or wound me, be thou still
The unknown Eros, God of Love!

III

Love lifted eyes half craving, half a dream
Unto my eyes, and on my mouth his own
Laid like a scarlet flame, that would consume
The mortal screen and search the naked soul;
Softer his head drooped, deeper on my breast—
With one slow sigh as if appeased he slept,
But drew me closer unto him and said—

—‘Long after now, in some far time to come
When you recall the blindfold web we wove
Of hate and heaven, jealousy and tears,
The sweet hid satisfactions that were ours,

The sophistries of touch no angel lures
From lutes of other paradise—
Shall you remember thus? palm wed to palm,
The deep in-breathing each of each, till soul
And body knew no separating flaw,
And Night! Night that brought back to us the stars!
Shall you remember thus, or cruelties—
The careless wounds and perfidies of Love?’

Then I to Love—my mouth left barren from
His parching kiss, cried back—‘Thy cruelties!
To hurt was more Love’s habit than to bless;
Stringing the heart to higher keys through pain.

But far from us such bitterness, to-night’—
And muted his insistence with my lips.
Speech drowned the while—in that lost interval
Love healed all hurt he ever gave, but left
Me troubled with a new, surpassing woe—
Trembling aslant my grave this perfect Now,
A spectral shadow of that far-off hour.

IV

Thou art a God!

Though now as mortal sleeping—
So humanly thy cheek curves to my breast,

And by pale hands of passion fond possessed —
Fugitive Thou, brief stayed from Love's unrest,
 Thy dreams no woman's keeping,
 Celestial poppies reaping
Thou art a God!
 Still to thine azure turning
Eros, impalpable Divinity,
Though we be wholly given, we have not Thee;
Youth, Night, and Summer Thou, eternally —
 For wingéd pleasure spurning
 Our mesh of mortal yearning,
Thou art a God!

V

Down arbour'd ways of dewy verdure dense in shade
Lies Night — the Sorceress — her sultry heart laid
 bare —

Within her bosom calm what secrets she conceals!
Hiding the dead who walk — the loveless who despair.

Echo and Silence sleep; the fountain's monotone
Accents the melancholy pause — alone entwines
Her passive cadence with the hush, save for light breath
Of Zephyr's fitful whispering beneath the vines.

The velvet-footed moth steals on from lure to lure —
Noiseless as fragile moonbeams lace and interlace;
Dreaming, the pointed pines reach out their dusky arms
To draw the gardens deeper into their embrace.

While wide immensity is peaceful slumbering
Bathed in nocturnal stupors, somnolence possessed,
For bright delirium of day at last consoled,
What lyric trouble is it stirs within the breast?

Did some dawn-haunted bird in salutation break —
Or some less distant star yearn to earth's loveliness
Across the marge of space?

Now fragrance infinite
The sense enamours — oh, passion's hour, passionless!
On wakeful wing widespread, unlingering, alas!
The Unknown Eros shadows the moon-drenched grass.

*To You — this blue flame of a well-burned life —
Angel or demon sprung of Love's hot hour,
An azure ghost of passion's molten strife —
Lone reveller o'er a grave of fire,
As Daphne — fleeing to the laurel night,
As Psyche — glancing ere she quenched the light.*

FLAME

I

FLAME only knows our love —
Love that is flame,
A blinding light —
A savage joy —
Love that is flame low singing
Around the wasting brand of life.

Flame only knows our love —
Flame that in glowing embers
Beats as the rose heart trembles,
Given flaring to her sun,
Flame only tells our love —
Love that is flame,
A blinding joy —
A savage zest —
Love that in good grey ashes
Lies down at last with Death.

II

If you blew on them with your mouth
Ashes would glow again,

The breath of you would kindle fires,
Though they had pallid lain
Long cold and shriven ;
Flame rising driven
Unto flame.
So my heart, burnt out and ashen,
Glows at the mention of your name.

TO ABELARD

THOU art the altar's holy candle flame
Unto God's glory lifted high,
A frail moth of the Summer dusk am I —
Eager within thy burning heart to die;
Unto God's glory lifted high
Thou art the altar's holy candle flame.

Lit by the hand of purest acolyte,
Submissive, thine to waste away,
Turning from scented snares I but obey
My single need to perish in thy ray;
Submissive, thine to waste away,
Lit by the hand of purest acolyte.

Thou art the blest beam in an evil world,
Such worship heaven will just requite:
Mine the brief bliss of one immortal flight —
Ecstatic martyr to thy sacred light;
Such worship heaven will just requite!
Thou art the blest beam in an evil world.

SHE JUSTIFIETH HER INCONSTANCY

ALTHOUGH your red lips speak alluring words
And from your lowered eyes the same beguilement
 issueth,
Although your wisdom runneth far and wide
Gathering fragrance to your eloquence,
Wistful I look on you —
Those charms fall powerless;
Though by the selfsame sorceries conjured
That erst be-spelled,
I am no longer yours.
For sake of one whose lightest breath is flame,
Whose glance is azure ether
And whose voice more cruel than strange
Magics or old pleasure,
Myself I lost beneath the shadowing Eros
High ascending,
No longer am I yours;
By love immured —
Seeing you wondrous still and all-to-be-desired —
Muffled I grope —
You are but pantomime,

Helpless as longing in a dream to reach me while
His mounting fires consume my will.

Take your bewildering way —
Nor pause to harken by my garden door again,
For she who sang of you
Is silent,
Though she hears your step recede —
Within his flowered walls
Her heart is listening for wings.

TO ———

A flame forever winds your brow —
As halos wont to mediate
Our mortal with divinity,
Lifting the glorified from common fate
Of passionate fault or faithless constancy —
A Bodhisattva, for Love's sake
Renouncing proffered deity,
The vexed and tender way of earth to take.

SERENADE

*The clustered grapes hang purple 'neath the moon,
Their heady stupors tinge the veins of sleep,
From out the dark a restless mavis calls —
Closer the tides of midnight creep.*

*Each wayward instinct stilled within the fold,
Their innocence a prayer — the white flock lies;
'Neath spangled shepherding both man and beast —
Higher the tides of midnight rise.*

*The wild deer covert in the fern,
Let Love the lattice bar no more!
Night breaks the slave-chains of the day —
O'er us the dream-tides whelming pour.*

GLOIRE D'AMOUR

O QUENCH the sun,
Blur every star,
And bid the moon begone!
Love will the surer blindfold grope
To heavens of his own.

He lights the soul
With myriads
Of pagan fires to bliss —
Grant Love his hour of blazing darks,
His heavens glory-hid!

O quench the sun,
Blur every star,
And bid the moon begone!
Let Love with hot immortal lips
Find heavens of his own!

IN MAY

Oh, say to Love, the orchard —
A crescent in the West,
Say lilacs in the twilight —
And Love will know the rest.

Oh, say to Love, the mill-stream
Waking the short hours through —
One restless night bird calling —
The drench of blossom dew.

Oh, say the crescent waning
Ere passion, breast on breast —
Say the swift dawn o'ertaking —
And Love forgive the rest!

AIR OF A FLUTE WITHIN THE NIGHT

(Translated from the French of Edouard Beaufils)

AIR of a flute within the night,
Sweet — tender — melancholy —
Tracing the sinuous harmony
Of a clear calling stream in flight.

Sole voice beneath the stars' far light,
I vaguely share thy revery —
Air of a flute within the night,
Sweet — tender — melancholy.

Cadence that cradles all despite,
No word may ever echo thee !
What matter ? weeping pensively,
Listening afar, it follows me —
Air of a flute within the night !

SILENCE

UNBIND the laurel from immortal brows
And cast it down, ye lyric seraph train,
For Love hath sought from your gold-throated band
Her adoration's chorister in vain.

Nor hath the lyre of Israfel prevailed,
Nor pastoral piping sweet of Sicily,
Nor lesser voices sighing deathless vows,
Nor votary of any Muse — for she
Neither by silver lute nor breath prefers
Divine begotten secrets be confessed;
Nay — Love made wise by stars inscrutable,
Worships in silence on the loved one's breast.

Mute now your flashing strings, oh, rainbow harp!
Oh, viols fond forbear your minstrelsy!
Nor nightingale be chanting on —

Love wills

All Nature's nuptial chorus hushed shall be —
Than passion's trembling eloquence more blest
Deemeth she silence — on the loved one's breast.

WHITE NIGHT

WHILE the incurious stars burnt on —
And Night as weary caravans the hours led,
I asked of God, in dreams your soul to keep
Till morning wake you glad — then comforted
I fell asleep,
While the incurious stars burnt on.

TEMPORA MUTANTUR

WHEN bells
From their high towers
Chime over us,
My Love,
My Own,
I shiver for the passing hour flown,
The wing of Time
Scarce hovering
That bears us on.

Twelve — and, alas !
One — the shortest night !
Two — so soon the light ?
Three — white pales the East,
Four — the shore of day in sight —
A shadow on the grass,
Alas !

Our night is gone —
My Love,
My Own,
Our shortest Summer night is flown.

But if apart,
Alone,
When bells
From their high towers
Ring over us
My Love,
My Own,
How otherwise their chiming salutations fall !
Each chime a knell of absence rung.

Twelve — and rejoice !
One — the longest night must pass !
Two — not yet the light ?
Three — almost the day in sight —
Four — the heart of Time beats on —
 For one less night
 Rejoice !
The night is gone —
My Love,
My Own,
The longest Summer night is flown !

WAKING

WHEN the rivers rise in exultant grace
And the misty trees with their half-closed eyes
Like a dreamy Lover's waking face
Lift their heads to the morning skies ;
While the first bird maddens the dewy brake
Thrilling a passion o'er and o'er
That hungers and trembles for love's own sake —
Lest sated rapture can no more !
With a daze of green on the upland steep,
'Neath a blur of hyacinthine hills —
With May-bloom flooding the veins of sleep,
We shall meet — with a joy that kills.

AUBADE

THOU art my wings —
And thou the nest
Where to I fly ;
Thou art the sky,
Thou art the soaring rest
Beyond white cloud — where no bird sings.

Thou art my dawn —
The mated call
I answer, Love !
Thou art above
The choiring — 'neath the small
Heart, breaking that the night is gone.

Thou art the Sun —
The tremor thou
Within my breast,
Thou art my West —
The East I spurn, as now
To heaven I hail thee, day begun !

SLEEPING AT DAWN

And if she slept at dawn—
While the first birds of April wove
Their young awakening song
Of Spring,
Had she not drank of beauty to the brim—
Till Love gave sleep,
Whose dearer dreams of him
Within her still
Were whispering on, sweeter, more rapturous
Than outward call?
Nor would she wake to hear
The first lark of Creation's own
Experimental morn,
If so it were
To miss recovered accents
Like to those unheard
Save by the spirit sense.

And if she slept at dawn—
While the first birds of April wove

Their young awakening song,
Oh, Keeper of her heart!
Outsoaring them
Her soul was on the wing.

RED JADE

(From China)

As the red Rose at noon
 Crimson swooning —
Cannot hold her hot petals
At touch of her Sun,
But shivering,
 Reluctant,
 Resisting,
Yields them trembling
Sweet one by one —
To the last ravished bloom —
 So I refuse Him,
My Lord—Red Jade Lover!
Nor his kiss can relinquish,
Though too soon
He constrain me,
 Reluctant,
 Resisting,
Till sweet one by one —
I am petal bereft by my Sun
At the midnight high noon.

TO A FACE IN SLEEP

SMITTEN by sleep as never waking dares,
Untame and proud no more,
Too strangely meek —
Bent unresponsive to a whispering kiss,
All ignorant of tears
That rise at his defencelessness —
By day a bannered host, by night
A man asleep on the young heart of Life
Beating beneath in quietness;
A Pagan trusting immemorial charms,
A Lover spent,
As she who wakes to ward.

A captive bound in slumber here he lies
Delivered unsuspecting to her gaze,
Power and passion love-surprised,
Not death-despoiled,
For over him his soul in light abeyance hovering,
Each dear known curve the while consenting
In the languid grace of sleep;
An alien so inscrutable
As were Love mated with a fallen star,

Or flashing bird of lightning wing
Drooping from tropic paradise.

Is there a realm of sleep
Than day more fair?
Where blind to earth he may arise as evening star
To reign in golden systems of delight?
Returns he now a Sultan to his slaves?
Or gliding 'neath the shadow portal closed
To all save those with poppy sandals shod,
Tracing the muted password mystical
With phantoms long estranged
Holds pale converse?

Along what coasts of memory drift now
These idle sails
The helmsman's hands leave loose?
Led soft away in timelessness
With spirit trustful grown —
One faint shape lovely beckoning
Out of the shadow to a mortal dream?

Untouched by clamour or despite he sleeps.
Within his deepening secrecies
Playing a masque of kings?
Or Reveller with purple crews

Of wine-stained celebrants,
His brows with grape leaves twisted as a crown
While to his lute
He holds Love listening?
No longer man —
But Poet, Immortal now,
All mortal cannot be, in sleep he is;
Till gazing on him terrified,
Too long the guards of his brave citadel
Seem overthrown,
Day's armour slips aside —
No picket smile accosts the invading gaze,
The helmet raised —
But God ! those hidden eyes !
Not this —
Not this resigning of the imperious will,
Awake, Beloved, light thy life within !
Moonlight harmonious on the outward wall
Too sad, too calm —
Too beautiful, too wholly lost
The shuttered soul in some
Ineffable, remote Unknown.

Strange passive face,
Stripped in the nakedness of sleep

From the last posture of disguise,
Command the sovereign Spirit to stand forth !
From day's shorn unrequitals given o'er in sleep
Will he return ?

Or earthly lure suffice the wistfulness
Upon his face upturned to Beauty
Truth had never spoke ?
Beauty reflected on her worshipper.

To give him rest from living, Love gave All —
And he has gone to sleep,
Alone.

His shadow only in the flesh is here.

While he prolongs his moment high above the clouds
She can but wake and wait —

Forgot,

As night forgets the crimson bud of dawn ;
Longing to give him more than sense receives,
More than her body at his side stretched close —
Her spirit ranges baffled — for his sake
Divining new needs of divinity —
And, braving heaven to transcend Love,
Finds Love again,
And gives him back to Love
The First and Last.

No longer watching with affrighted eyes
Lest his diviner-lidded gaze be raised
Upon her marvelling,
Too sure surmised his light-winged heritage,
Or brushed too close
The heavenly fire he bears returning.
Out then the lifted torch !
Let veiling darkness fall
And Love within her heart the vigil keep,
Till dawn evoke the Lover as the man
To day's industrious labyrinth
Less jealous to engage him from her arms
Than sleep's lone peradventure of the gods.

*Love is a halt across the desert sand —
One night of stars to drink,
Of dear earned rest
Beneath the tropic heaven of your breast.*

*Then on—unswerved by weariness
Of our slow moving caravan of sense,
To further parched adventuring unguessed*

*Open the tent! 'Tis dawn!
I hear, I understand—
God sounds the clarion.*

FROM THE LOVE-MOODS OF A SLAVE GIRL

I

My heart is a bright dagger no hand may draw
From the sheath of his love — save that
Of my Lover.

II

Like a fountain pool
The yellow leaves have shrouded,
His kisses stifle my laughter.

III

The cadence of the fountain is a secret ever
Between falling water
And my dreaming passion —
The drops fall on my heart — as I listen
Again I am with him . . .
The cadence of the fountain is a secret ever,
A spell binding love and a Lover.

IV

Tears in my eyes have become as precious pearls
Since they bought me the kiss
Of a Lover.

V

One beam of light gleams and is gone,
The night is a desert without Him —
 Crouching down,
The darkness folds close arms about me,
On my mouth hot fragrance lies sultry —
Here slumber is deep,
Wide-winged birds tropic-plumed
Flash in silence —
Bright dreams mating dreams —
 Restless and wanton —
Where passion wakes wild in the jungle.

VI

At dawning the sun reaches deep to the heart
Of the Pine trees —
As the Lover's hands grope toward the Belovéd
On waking.

VII

All night the Moon watched at my window —
 Jealous Queen !
Half-masking in treetops — half-openly leaning
Beside me.

Then seeing no evil she paled away Westward
Ere morning.
And fain would I smile at her thwarted suspicion
Were I not more sad than she, that in vain
Was her vigil.

VIII

Strange —

Noon parches for midnight —
Kissing his footsteps in the temple shade,
The Yasmin droops for the Sun,
I wait for my Lord.
Strange !

Since now all forget us —
Then reaching, consume us
Till we are no more —
Slave girl, nor Noontime nor the Yasmin flower.
Strange !

IX

'Neath a white wall gold-meshed by tangerines,
A garden pagod shivers, as the winds
Blow furtive sunbeams where
Once pressed by amorous figures —
Discreet to murmured sighs —
Lies but a drift of yellow yasmin leaves.

Alas !

Pleasure has gone from the garden —
Nor longer the young crescent lingers —
Nor lovers are hid there —
Only pale fountains calling —
And my heart echoes footsteps withdrawing.

X

‘ Who bound these cords about your naked breast,
Fond Captive ?

Who your owner ? Speak,
That I may give bright gold and free you.’

‘ Loose me not, High my Lord ! ’Tis so I rest —
Dreaming his arms still bind me to him, who
Went from me to the temple.

’Tis Love you seek !
What his hand bound none other shall undo.’

*Heart, it is nothing —
Be not so afraid,
One beat — another —
Feel! we live!
'That is my fear.'
The traitor said.*

TO PRINCE PARADOX

To You — the music of silence,
The calm of delirious storm,
To You — the peace beyond passion —
The shadow of flame,
To You — the dawn of the midnight,
To You — forgetfulness' dream,
Oblivion, Prayer of the Senses —
Adorations supreme!

TO —

ALL night I waked
Praying I might hate You —
Oh, false Perversity !
Dawn saw me asleep
A smile on my lips
Dreaming you loved me !

THE GAMBLER

NAY, Love — I tremble — do not come to-day —
For sake of empty days when Thou
Com'st not.

Nay, come, Love! I will play
The barren future 'gainst this vivid Now.

TO A DEAD BIRD

FLYING — I beheld her at heaven's gate entreat.
Wounded by the hunter and fallen at my feet
Her ruffled feathers, glazing eyes,
Were as the lost illusion men despise.

IN STAINED GLASS

A Parable

ONCE out of Paradise
An Angel glanced down her white pinions
To a Soul on earth,
Where Lucifer as man disguised
Went forth.
And when this favorite Son of Morning saw
Her straying gaze escape
The Saint's communion, straight
He swept her from the parapets of innocence
And made her his.
Alas!
She who an Angel was became a passion flower,
And he was Satan as before,
With or without disguise
A fallen star, but always passion's courtier.
The darkness fell —
Night covered them;
Then came the awful sword play of the dawn —
And still she stayed with him
Nor got her back to those bright creatures —
Golden Gabriel,

The violet Israfel,
And all their sexless host above.

He called her Woman
And she named him Man;
Outcast of heaven and hell their child was born,
Not angel and not demon — just
A cross between,
Eden's lost daughter,
Mortal Eve.

ALLEGRO CANTABILE

THE 'cellos like immortal bees
Hum drowsy o'er a rhythmic thyme
Of muted violins and double bass combined —
As heat of noonday quivering,
The hush just stirred by wingéd things,
Till from the somnolence a flute note breaks,
Piping sweet Echo back to earth
From heaven.

And all the while
With lashes soft upon the loveliest cheek
A sunbeam ever kissed,
I see my shepherd lying fast asleep —
Lulled by faint Dorian strains,
Those vague forgotten airs
Of yester-years,
As now the oboë plays his simple dream
And now the wood-winds whisper on —
Bearing the soul away to Sicily,
Delicious hours —
And sylvan melodies of sheep bells
Ringing out of tune,

The wash of waves —
And harps arpeggio the golden mood
Of Summer indolence where love is young,
Where innocence is good —
And with the scent of sunburnt herbs
Comes the blythe certainty of many gods.

THE CYMBALIST

I WAIT —

Around me seethe the opposing powers of tone,
More slender sway the dizzy violins,
A whisper vibrating in sense alone —

Lost to itself,

Till wood-winds break the spell,

Hold the escaping breath —

Recall the theme to life while viols sigh assent,

The 'cellos deep release their prisoned souls,

The harps with liquid lightnings flame in chords

And multichords of ecstasy —

Swooning beneath the brazen blast of horns.

Above the teasing pulse-wave of the triangle

That pricks the nerves,

Lord of the blurring kettledrums

Or thunder of the Bass

At last —

I rise,

I lift my arm —

I wait —

One golden cymbal at my side,

One held aloft,

And with a gesture threatening heaven and hell
Crash pain on passion,
Glory on terror,
Madness on despair!
Cut life in two, and then —
Sit back and count a thousand bars.

ECHOES OF THE CHINESE

I

At the sound of his voice
The snow goes from the brooks — the Winter is over —
And green buds make my dead hope the sadder.

II

Since we two had no bit of porcelain
To break at parting
 Like primitive lovers,
Knowing nothing on God's earth could ever
Match that broken piece but its other —
And that no fire, only burial could end it —
I broke my heart with Him.

 Now no one else can ever
Fulfil the jagged fragment
Or supply the lacking morsel.

III

Behind those close-drawn jalousies
What are they doing?
Do they envy us, or if we knew
Should we despair
Thinking of their hidden hour?

IV

As the Son of Heaven at the hill shrines
Of the Holy Mountains
I paid the yellow sacrifice,
At the season of Half-Autumn, whose colour
Is golden —
If the sacrifice is accepted —
Ask your heart, oh, my Lover !

V

The Spring plays a lute of jade
Whose strings are touch,
And her song is April, Love and Haste —
And a hint of rapture —
As you are ever, my Lover.

VI

I have locked the home of Life
And the key is hidden in my heart,
If tears were poems —
Or if the snow were daffodils —
Or nightfall the Spring dawn —
Oh, my Beloved !

VII

I have walled up my heart around you —
Go up again to the watch-tower of your soul
Oh, Seer,
And speak again !

VIII

As the sheath waiting rigid
The thrust of the drawn sword
Having served,
I wait for my Lord.

IX

Take not thy mouth from mine —
For Death is pacing toward us
To breathe between — chill lips intercepting.
My kiss is Life,
Take not thy mouth from mine !

JEALOUSY

THE shadow of Allah's wing
Now droops closer,
Ceaseless I brood —
Watching him, my Lord
In a midnight courtyard by a fountain
As he watched Her —
Pallid in desert moonlight and gazing
Upon an almond leaf fallen frail
On the waters.
And though at morning he left her forever
I swear his dreams linger.

IN EXILE

In the high glare of noon,
When the sun is hottest
I go to the dusty village to mail his letter,
Because I pass by the fountain —
An alien, always wondering aloud
How it came here?

Its bright drops fall sparsely
To make me remember
Drop by drop
Hotter noons, sadder fountains
Across the sea.
Alas! dear Exile, we are solitary here —
In the high glare of noon
When the sun is hottest in the dusty village,
For listening to you I hear the beads of a nun
Slip through her fingers —
Slowly dropping,
One by one dripping
Behind a grating in some cool chapel,
Or I see wine poured out in shaded courtyards

And hear a voice long dead imploring
'A little love for Jesus' sake!'

And I go home beguiled
Dreaming of vineyards —
Of Tuscany — and hidden passion —
And to me you are a Ghost,
A haunted fountain —
Until I wonder if others see you,
Or hear your bright drops falling
One by one
Like a rosary,
When the sun is hottest in the dusty village
In the high glare of noon?
And now I am going again — to mail this,
And see if you are there
Wondering still to yourself
Why?

IL MANQUE

'All dressed up,' shrug the Hollyhocks
As the West winds passing blow,
'All flaunted forth in crimson and pink,
And nowhere at all to go !'

'All dressed up,' bows the tallest one,
While the chorus from top to toe
Flout their frills to the mocking sun —
'And nowhere at all to go !'

'All dressed up,' sigh the Hollyhocks,
'For our brief Midsummer show —
Mauve and coral, buff and cerise,
And nowhere at all to go !'

All dressed up in once-a-year best,
Prince, will you leave them so?
Flounced and ruffed to the top of their stalk
And nowhere at all to go !

TO DAPHNE

FOLLOWING Daphne fleeing — I awake !

Not the laurels now that take

Her from me hot pursuing,

Wrap her shape

Beyond escape,

But the dawn to my undoing

Prisons me in hours ensuing —

With her loveliness un-overtaken,

Dream forsaken !

*Some men give women honour and a name,
And others palaces with shame
And jewels unconfessed—
Exchange for pleasure that love only knows;
None of these gifts my Love on me bestows,
Only divine unrest—
Haunted I follow on where Beauty goes,
Her footprint and my Lover's are the same.*

INTO MY THOUGHTS HE COMES

INTO my thoughts he comes
At morning as at eve —
The while I listen to the small cross bees
Amid the mignonette,
Or set the quaint old silver straight upon the shelf,
Restore a book unto its honoured place
Familiar to his touch —
Or brush the hearth where as the flame last night
His fancies mounted
Up the wide chimney, past the swallows' nests
To seek the stars.
Into my thoughts he comes as I dust light
The shining table from the drift of ash
Impatient tipped by his white hand
That holds a wizard in its grasp
Of life and death.
I think of him upon his daily round,
Holding the weighty balances
So true and firm —
Bringing to pass the ordered facts of life ;
I think of him — a moment paused — to hear a bird,

Or smiling to himself

At some shrewd word recalled, or at some little hand

Waved to him as his car flies past

By some small stranger comrade of the road.

A thousand ways I fashion him in thought,

Coming — and going — in and out —

Both far and near —

While the rain makes its friendly din upon the roof

As oft when sheltering both,

Or the great wind he loves sends the red maple trees

Crusading on the hill !

Even I think of him as oftenest he comes —

Up the long grass path to the open door,

Standing with his swift figure cut against the light

Of afternoon or evening red, or with a rising moon

Upon his shoulder, gladness in his eyes

For omen of his luck —

In those brave eyes

Unswerving at the truth of pain or wrong.

But just to-day came this strange wondering —

What if he sometimes take me in —

Over the threshold of his inmost thought?

So intimate, so big with shock

It came, unbid,
I could no further think,
I could but feel —
Blind to the bees amid the mignonette
As to the vision of my heart.
If I be there — if once within his thought
Shut in with him —
What homing for a dizzy swallow while she reels
In gold of skies far circling —
Yet aware!

TO A CLOUD

WHILE here I lie
Held down and balked in all my soul desires,
I watch you flying Cloud
O'er tree and hill,
Scornful of earth's low barricades,
And when at last I lie within her breast
Bound round with dark,
Still will you drift with your eternal mates
Above imprisoning of life or death.
And yet — and yet —
I envy not your towering crest
That so serenely now out-soars the white-cowled peak,
While the stern vulture wings beat back and fall
Before your tireless wandering,
For I, the lowly mortal, have found all the end of
 roaming —
And felt the touch of Love's low-flying wing
Once folded close —
And though bound down I languish unto death
While you drift on —
Never for you to come within the embrace
That was my heaven here beneath.

Go, fleeing Seraphim, float on!
Nor whence nor whither driven
Waft to your sunset goals!
No envy mine for such celestial vagrancy,
For you no sharing of the truth we two have known
Together in the flesh,
Slow miles below your wraith of liberty.

NOON AND THE SEA

I SAW my Lover go down to the sea,
Beauty to beauty and grace to grace,
Meet with her, greet her, gorgeously take her —
Two equal majesties face to face!

What was the frenzy of desperate waters
Lawless of man,
To him joyous and pagan?
Wild, free, afraid not,
Wide-breasted he dared her —
Passion to passion he took and was taken,
Deep full embraced in the fathomless ocean.
Master and Lord of her craving eternal.

Life unto life and power to power,
Strength unto strength, I saw them mingle,
Clasping and cleaving together the closer —
Calm in the rage of reiterant struggle,
Worsted and worsting,
Unslaked, unabating,
Unwonted, unweakened, untrammelled, undaunted —
Two savage wrestlers,
Two tameless forces,
Two equal Lovers immortally mating!

UPON THE HILL

UPON the hill, save for some smuggled bee
Within a flower hid, rolling his satyr sides
In honeyed revelry,
No sound —
Scarcely a straying air without the soft grass
Where to lay its wandering down;
Far lost beneath
The industrious road resigned of pilgrim feet
While overhead the August blueness beat like a heart
Constant to ecstasy!
And all about the encircling mountains, musing
In lofty terms of forest wisdom, high concerns of
 peace —
Their brows uplifted
In the faith of night and stars
To crown the day's long watchfulness.
Of bird or kine no dissonance —
No sound —
Till Love by Beauty spurred imperative,
Out of the silence and the rapture
Took — and gave —
As the bright frenzy of the sea,
As high remoteness of the mountain peak

Each was to each —

Within their arms they held the Infinite

And in the impassioned moment drained eternity.

Between the gleaming leaves' green sheltering

God looked upon them there,

Believed in their divinity

And in the heat and glory of the noon walked near.

FOREST AUTUMN

LET the leaves fall —
Betraying to the sun the confidence
Of partridge coppice and the squirrel's hole,
The bandit hawk's high-masoned nest
Left brazen on the sky —
Autumn's unwonted gaze invade alike
The buried rabbit with bright hasting eyes —
And the wild furry things that closer crouch
Within their lair
Laid open to the stars; —
What though the Hunter's moon surprise
The sleepless stream's shy breast,
Nor sun nor star, nor Hunter's moon shall guess
The secret hiding-place
Wherein a lover's heart
Takes covert,
Finds safe rest.

*October — Cummington
At Bryant's Home*

FLY!

'A dead leaf would fly in a high wind'

FLY, fly!

Though they be borrowed wings

That bear thee so on high

For one brief ecstasy —

Fly, fly!

What were it to have known

A wind beneath thine own

Despondency?

Fly, fly!

Thy sluggish veins as mounting bird inspire.

Fly, fly!

Give to the winds their will —

Not left alone when Spring

Recalls her burgeoning,

To hang

A mock, a withered thing.

But loosening thy hold

To catch the breeze,

To fly!

Adventuring a heart-beat's width in space!

Oh, heart of me, take grace
Of this wild leaf —
And in Love's breath,
His all-consuming breath
Fly, fly!
Thy moment's space,
Thy little transport comes but once
Perchance,
Nor will the Autumn ever turn again
To sweep thee — fling thee
With her rainbow sheaf.
Mad little heart
Then fly!
As were death ecstasy.

Though Love's wings be his own
And swift thou fall or die —
Fly up my heart!
Nor Love deny,
Where mortals merely plod
Hail thy gay peradventure,
Be a god!
One little instant,
Fly! fly!
Nature will have it so —

Her sport art thou,
Or on her side to victory
Ride her gold chariot race,
Be though not obstinate,
As never at thy Summer fullness
Fly, fly!
Mad little heart,
'Tis Nature bids thee fly!

IT SNOWS IN MY HEART

WHY so cold while the South winds are blowing —
Sweet Love of mine, why so cold?

‘I dread the North wolves sure to follow
The track of the Autumn gold.’

Why do you shiver — our hearth is blazing,
Sweet Love warm hid on my breast?

‘For sake of a snowflake footfall crossing
The grave of my heart’s unrest.’

Your lips are frozen though mine are burning —
Why, Sweet Love of all delights?

‘For envy of Lovers sleeping close
Through the long white Winter nights.’

THE HOOK

THE yellow eddy and the sunburnt pool
Are here the same—
The overhanging blackness of the ferny stone
Invites at noon,
The alder tangle hides a kindred finny throng
That veer and idle—dart and disappear.
Down the light gust the gauzy flies
Drop to the stream's clear surface as before—
But though I see the tempting bait
And mean to rise—
I bear a hook within my side.
My brothers flash and fall with jaws set wide—
Alone I glide beneath the mossy stone,
Mad with the pain of yesterday, and wise.

Prince, kill us rather, do not set us free—
Let our long torture shame your angler's art,
What glamour has the Summer day for us, if we
Still bear your hook within our heart?

L'ENVOI

I HEARD Love's footfall muffled, faltering—
Love of the friendly eyes—
All eagerly I bade him in
And made him room to bide,
My home to be his sheltering
I flung him wide the door,
And still Love of the friendly eyes
 Asked more.

I spread my hoarded treasures,
Poured music's mounting wine,
Nor spared the purple of my hills—
Great moons athwart my pines,
I filled his glass with suns and stars
All out of reach before—
And still Love of the hungry eyes
 Craved more.

I shared my Saint's companioning,
High legendries of death,
By childhood faith and phantasy
I bade Love be refreshed,

Within my arms I gave him rest,
My heart his burden bore—
And still Love of the weary eyes
Sought more.

I heard Love whispering unstilled—
Love of the stranger eyes—
And gave my body to be burned
In his consuming fires,
And kept that love without which gift
My deed no halo wore—
And still Love of the sleepless eyes
Took more.

Then given, burned in Love's duress
Arose my shriven soul—
That lost for Love in very truth
With Love had been made whole,
To look in Love's immortal eyes
With heaven nor hell denied,
And then Love of the hidden eyes
Slept satisfied.

GONE

I DIED last night—

 The earth let go,
And love's last nail gave way,
The Slave girl rose as flames arise,
I broke my house of clay!

I dropped the toy I earlier felt

 Was life's divinest star,
The love of Him become as pale
As lost Novembers are.

I closed the door on passion's hearth—

 I ran, I flew, I left
Triumphant, that small former thing
That was my older self.

His heart was dark as past I raced

 Outstripping slower ways,
His soul set close to those same goals
We tried to share in vain.

He never dreamed that I was dead—

 Or his the hand that slayed

My being's utmost certainty,
And unto life betrayed.

It broke within me like a morn
 Upon our Eastern hills—
That life was dead but death still lived
To take a Reveller in!

My hesitating feet that oft
 Had stumbled at his door,
Out on the peaks of high escape
Were shod like meteors.

Red Aldebaran led me on—
 I met the very rays
That travelled for a thousand years
My skyward track to blaze.

He may live on—
 Important, wise—
The Slave has gone away—
Up higher hills, through wider space,
Outwitting Destiny!

MY SAINT

*Guarding my shrine where ecstasy
With Thee is hid,
No door of jewelled ivory,
No taper lit—
Save my own heart consuming ceaselessly.*

TO ONE BELOVED

I

WHAT is love beyond the grave?
Is it memory or dust?
Is it spectral — is it brave?
Has it still an ought and must?

Is it fluid? Conscienceless?
Is it universal — pure?
Has it hands nor heart to bless?
Has it courage to endure?

Does it cherish — does it care?
Does it smile upon our pain?
Has it only wings and air
Where a weary head has lain?

I but vaguely have inferred —
Is it you and is it me?
Or are theme and phrasing blurred
In unrhymed obscurity?

I DREAMED that I forgot you — wandering wide —
 Aware you missed me — comfortless ;
Then woke, so sharp my grief, to bless
The truth that you had died
How many lilac Aprils since !
And I of such unwaking perfidy
Was powerless — to realize with bliss
That dreams be fashioned out of falsity,
And death for us held never sting like this —
That I for one short Summer night forgot !
It could not be.

Out of the pearl
 Of the twilight at dawn,
I heard a Thrush,
And arose
To follow — once only the call
Then silence —
And my heart knows
Out of the hush
Of long death
Thy voice still inquires.

No bird it was —
But a soul wandering back,
As a thrush to its lilac
Of old —
Or Love to its own.

SEVEN YEARS AFTER

A DAY like this

I know if she is let,

My Love is turning back

From death —

In this September footfall of the rain

We loved, I seem to hear

Her light foot come again

Up to my open door —

About her form

The drifting yellow leaves

Blown as a merry shroud,

That rustles as she flits beneath old trees

She left.

She is so near

A day like this —

I feel her dreams

Turn home to me,

And all the crowns and harps are vain

To match the whisper of the rain

Upon the leaves—

Up that dear path that leads her to an open door —
Where with arms vague outstretched, I stand
To welcome her — and draw her in once more —
My ghost of Autumn yesterdays.

THE PRICE

SHADOW swept —

 The gold September breeze

Flitting across their stones

 In gusty traceries,

Who would not lie

As calm, unheeding —

And as low as these?

Eager and troubled dust

 They laid them down —

Part of the term

 They named Realities,

And here at last they lie

 Vassals of Destiny,

Awaiting evolutions yet to be —

Creation's further pleasantries with them.

Who would not lie with all forgot

 Remote and low as these,

With folded thoughts

 And risen memories?

Oh my wild heart, my troubled heart

Cease envying, do!
Their dust the last deception knew,
Their peace embalmed in mystery
Was bought by passion too.

AVE AMOR

LAST night I took the hillside path to you —
One chariot cloud swung radiant before
To herald me — with evening bells brimmed o'er
Our well belovéd valley's heart of blue;
Day from your hallowing silences withdrew —
Night fell and peace — all dissonance forbore;
Over your grave I heard the thrush outpour
Love's dulcet unrelinquishing anew.

Such risen beauty disembodied me.
Before such answering compassionate
All save this death-lit hour of love was not,
When with young moon for kin and company
Skyward I turned me from our postern gate,
The little shattered human thing forgot.

T. G. D. — "DEARE CHILDE"

Aged eight years

THE afternoon broods timelessness,
The instants are as years
While I stand musing there —
Not a hand lifted, not a sigh escaping on the air,
No hint of joy or hope or young despair —
Nor age, nor tears.

Gone back to dust —
Or infinitely on — somewhere —
All that was love and eagerness
And golden hair.

TO A WOMAN BELOVED

If you are you —

Then God is good,
Less merciful, less wise
Can scarce be He who made our mould
And doth our sum comprise;
His absolute must wide include
Our greater as His less,
Nor work of His surpass His will
In power to love and bless.

If you are you —

God must be God,
And guessing from your heart He made,
I hail you omen of His love
And cease to be afraid.

A LAST WISH

WHEN 'neath the grass you lay me down, to rest —
Or wend wan vistas of eternity,
Turn not my face unto the sacred East
But to the South — all shall be well with me.

For opal dreams of paradise would fail
Within their far forgetful mesh to hold
My spirit from the nightly vision pale
Of thee.

So let me keep in death the old
Earth habit of my haunted sleep —
To wake toward thee and weep!

When 'neath the grass you lay me down, to rest —
Or wend wan vistas of eternity,
Turn my face Southward Love, as now, to thee —
Not to the East — all shall be well with me.

IN MEMORIAM PERPETUAM

DOWN the slow afternoons of Afterward

No dream of Paradise

Nor Saints with open palms,

Averted eyes —

Be mine beneath the sward;

Your living grace and fire

I envy not,

Only upon my tablet be writ large,

‘Here she forgets

As he forgot.’

AMOR VINCIT OMNIA

Death conquers All.
Love conquers Death,
The Conqueror —
And these be They
Who through great tribulation gave
Us Victory.
By faith in deeds and hope and lives
Like Theirs,
Love conquers All.

GOOD-NIGHT

WE kissed as Lovers do — last night,
With just a wistful lingering,
A half-feigned comedy of fright —
A hint of hope for fond good-nights
That fonder silence bring.

To-night we part as soldiers do,
The eve of battle sundering;
Can this be real — for me, for you —
To-morrow and to-morrow too?
Scant words, a startled wondering.

We spoke no treason of good-bye —
The bugle sounding called for me,
We kissed at daybreak — on the sky
Dawn's crimson writing cited thee
For love's 'peculiar bravery.'

A FRENCH GIRL TO HER BETROTHED BLESSÉ
AUX YEUX

WHAT need hast thou of sight
To read my soul? Why care
To see, when thou can'st hear my heart
And touch my hair?
Just as thou lovest France
Let me love thee,
Is there a higher way
Of loyalty?

'Tis well thou see'st not —
How from the shrines my eyes
Are turned to thee, in worship of
Thy sacrifice?
Just as thou hast served France
May I serve thee —
Enough to stand near one who faced
Infinity.

Our Guardian Angel walks
Beside us day and night,
Till the sweet dawn of Paradise

Give back thy sight;
Just as thou gavest France
Let me restore,
Bear on the torch of France — thy sons —
Could God grant more?

SOMEWHERE IN NEW ENGLAND

SOUTHWARD, the fragrant orchards droop,
Beyond—familiar mountains rise;
The Autumn stays her purple ruth
While to the hush the wild brook cries
Those sweet old canticles of youth.
The highway lingers, leans and climbs,
Summer—a wild rose in her hair—
Her whilom gipsy lover calls
To rocky hillside pastures, where
The gaze breaks wide o'er crumbling walls—
Down ferny gorge and pine-girt ridge
To hazy slopes of afternoon,
Emerald distance, azure, gold—
Dreaming beneath a harvest moon
Of sheep bells winding to the fold.

Old earth, old heaven well beloved,
Each peak in fancy mirrored clear,
Where I have met each marching Spring,
As wild goose of the yester-year,
Back to your heart my own I bring

In vain ! This acreage of peace
Goes blind of beauty or romance—
For burnt into my eyes I see
Only the mangled fields of France,
And Death — the reaper — gleaning agony.

HIS LAST LETTER

Dictated — From a Base Hospital in France

I SHALL be dead when this gets to you,
 Out of the trenches, over the sea —
Up by the road that cuts straight through hell
The land of Hate sees the last of me —
My ghost will fly to our cottage door
'Neath those sweet hills where you sit and sew,
My little war bride who never dreamed
What parting was — till I had to go ;
Had to go because I was yours —
 Had to go because I was free —
 Had to go for sake of the son
 You were willing to bear for me.

I leave him nothing but pride and You —
I leave you nothing but pride and Him —
It is enough — you told me so —
I can go over this mad world's rim
Glad to have lived, begotten and died,
Holding Love safe from the ravisher Hun,
Glad of my call to Go West to-night,
With my last Look-out over and done.

Glad to go because I am yours —

Glad to go because I am free —

Glad to go for sake of the son

You were willing to bear for me !

How the whippoorwill sings to the rising moon —

. Now the star shells are breaking — see !

No more to say — good-night, little girl —

I'll be with you at reveille —

Glad to go I was yours —

Glad to go free —

Glad Son

You for me —

BEFORE

1917

THE din of the jazz band
Harasses, confuses my senses —
Derisive of music, mere rhythm discordant,
It forces to motion,
It mocks at inaction,
Yet I cannot move from the doorway —
Though it hurts and molests me,
Stuns and defies me,
I gaze at the dancers all down the long gallery ;
Breathless girls, with fancy excited,
And soldiers in khaki — strutting forward and endlessly
backing,
And sailor boys graceful in wide flowing trousers —
All pacing together the brilliant lit gallery,
Just perceptibly ragging —
From side to side swaying —
With arms interlaced, spellbound by the measure
Of the jazz — now ribald with horns, bells and rattles.

And I shiver —
For I know the sequel.

They are ordered to Pershing to-morrow,
Daybreak will see them embarking:
No son of them dreams it — good-bye is forgotten —
As tensely enjoying
They dance on — flushed and smiling —
Eager with boyhood and solemn with pleasure.
But I see — white faces —
Upturned on the far fields of Flanders —
Fallen as stars unrecorded,
And the din of the jazz band
Harasses, confuses my senses —
As derisive of music, sheer rhythm discordant
It forces to motion —
It jibes at inaction —
Yet I cannot move from the doorway,
Where I watch them — all down the long gallery,
Strutting forward and endlessly backing,
With arms interlaced, slightly ragging —
For I know their hour is striking —
And I cannot move from the doorway.

AFTER

1919

THAT jazz sounds good to me!
No—I won't dance—not yet awhile at least—
I thank you, Mother, I don't feel
Like dancing, somehow, just at first.
You see it makes me think—I got to think
That better men than me—
Oh, better men than me—
You can't quite get it, Mother—never mind!

It sure is good,
To get back in a crowd like this—
To God's own girls—we used to call 'em over seas,
That pink one is some peach!
No—thank you just the same—
Not quite yet, please,
I'd rather sit and see 'em rag a bit.

The lads deserve it—sure they do.
G——! but we didn't know what we were up against
That night a year ago,
When we were dancing here, like this.

It all comes back to me —
Over the ship's side in the dark, we went —
That wet cold dark before the light,
And my Bud had a date with that pink peach
When he got back. Poor chap!
He lost his luck in the Argonne
It's that — seeing their faces so,
That makes me want to sit here quiet by the wall,
It's better men than me that won't come back.

I thank you, Mother, no — I'm out of luck myself.
You did not notice it, perhaps?
Nothing at all to speak of —
Only a leg left over there —
I wish 'twas more — something I could be proud of —
Now, my friend, that big chap by the door,
He lost an arm at our Château house-party, look?
It's hard on him.
He played the fiddle like a streak, before.
He's 'dropped it' now he says — [— 'twas his right
arm —]
Yes, do! Get that pink peach for him.
He dances all the newest turns.
I'll sit and watch 'em here,
He never palled with Jim — the lad I spoke of,

So, he won't be thinking what I'd have to think,
If it was me.

No, I'm not hungry, thanks.
I've kind of lost my taste for cake to-night.
Only just landed Tuesday, so it makes me queer at first,
Out of it, in a crowd like this.
It makes me think — I got ter think —
That better men than me —
God ! but —
Excuse me, Mother — that slipped out.
Don't worry, I'm all right.
Go to it! That big soldier by the door —
A cigarette? Well, I don't mind —
Sure, I'm all right.
I'll light a Lucky Strike,
And watch 'em rag a bit
Till I get by.

SHELL-SHOCKED

THE grey eyes drifted out toward dreams —
His hand in mine gripped till my own was white,
A long, tense silence — then
He spoke,
‘ Yes, Mother, you’re the girl I love too well to stay.
I’d only be a rotten care on you.
I’ll write you, sure I will!
Now let me go.
I don’t care if I live or die to-day.
Why, over on Fourth Avenue just now,
I all but lost my game foot by a car —
“ What t’ hell do you mean? Blow your old horn! ”
says I,
“ Where was you, any way, when I was over there,
in hell,
Savin’ your job for you? ”
The Cop held up his hand.
Traffic stood still — for me, it had to!
Say, but I had to laugh to see ’em wait for me!
Some Movie Close-up that!
Say, where’s the girl who let me hold her hand
Last night? Gee! but I was in pain!

I am most all the time—I'm used to it.

You're all I've got—

But even you ain't real, you know,

I call you Mother, but I ain't your son,

I absolutely ain't.

Me? I'm a wild one, Mother, let me go!

Six months, the Doctor said.

Well, I've had mine—

A lot more too, than most—

Shell-shocked, gassed and buried—look!

That sounds like holy writ—me, holy! Gee—

And submarined for luck,

Twice to the bottom, but I couldn't drown,

Just simply couldn't dear, because I didn't care.

The girlies always get me, or the drink—

Nails in my coffin, every glass I take—

And each small Lucky Strike I smoke,

They tell me now.

“Well, gold nails, then,” I'll say. I only use the
best—

That's why I wish I was your son.

Don't cry, dear Mother-mine, don't cry!

I'll stay—I absolutely will.

I promise you.

We'll go right on pretending we belong.
You never had no son but me, you said —
You are a game one too!
Come, cry it out together, dear —
Laugh now! That's it! Smile — and I'll stay —
But this can't go on so, forever —
Dearest Mother mine,
I'm shell-shocked, shot to pieces —
Better let me go!'

THE HOME GUARD

STANDING up to attention,
In gala uniforms new —
Shouldering bloom in ranks of four,
The hollyhocks wait for you.

Will you come and review them
From red fields of Picardy —
Or do they blend with the poppies
In dreams of love and me?

Have you forgot in Flanders,
The way to your garden gate?
Has the skylark outsung the robin
Calling you early and late?

Come dear dead at Midsummer!
Awake to old witcheries —
The hollyhocks wait your guard-mount
In a garden over-seas!

AND if my heart fails on its marching way,
As children do I set in dear array
Upon my bed —
The letter that you wrote one Summer day,
A pencil that you loaned me at the play,
I coveted —
A military button that you wore
Upon your sleeve of khaki, — and then more
And last a crumpled cablegram that bore
Unsigned, undated, two words — “As before.”

*Life broke three philtres over me —
Youth with its dazzling wizardry,
Love with adoring treachery,
Then Truth; God's own finality.*

TO ELIZABETH

*Who offered her life to France and was worthy to give
the supreme gift.*

Buried with military honors at Sedan, February, 1919.

MARCH loosed her portent on relenting winds,
Suns sought the faithful willows bourgeoning
In furry sheath — as in the yester-years;
April has called her rivers from the hills
By myriad flashing streams, whose voices swell
To choruses of Springtime jubilant —
Forcing the embosomed flowers to hear and push
Each calix up at Nature's summoning;
Until by crocus, and by crescent moon
Along the low horizon's brimming curve,
By lengthening eves of dewy blossomed breath,
By homing birds, and sweet accustomed tides
Of leaf and song — May dons her gipsy coat
To greet the herald passing her wide door —
The South Wind, on his own pipes waking Pan.

And where the loveliest spot if not our own
Hill-sheltered country — valley that we call
Our little bit of earth and heaven — our home?

Yet where to-night a shadow flits across
The garden path, and hovers on the green
The gladness has a wistful, troubled hint
Of beauty May can never quite recall,
To us who loved a human contour more
Than all this dancing gladness of the year —
Rebirth of leaf and wing, of song and shine;
Who love her an immortal mortal still.

Youth was her bright persistent heritage,
She cast her challenge to the darker powers
Of evil, fear and age — dispersing them.
What clouds could dim a courage like to hers,
Or peril daunt a spirit so on fire?
She heard the cry of breaking France for aid!
Instant her gallant answer came, and free
She flung her banner as a gleaming flame —
No less a warrior's heart than that sweet Maid's
Of Dom Remy was hers — a knightly soul
As ever hero bore — 'without reproach
Or fear' — and pure as the shy vision hid
By fringed blue gentian — darling of the wood,
That unspoiled wilding of the Autumn's love!
Gay as the brook that sings itself away
In curling madrigals of haste and fern,

And as the sunbeam flecks the forest deep
With gold, it glinted on her haloing hair.

True as the appointed seasons in their course
Her race she eager ran, and unappalled;
Nor more than Nature faltered at the plan
Of high creation's destiny, nor failed
To trace remoter majesty of stars,
Nor any sky-born hint of hid design,
Nor shrank from searching any deeps profound
Beneath the shifting surface of mankind;
Child of courageous suns and solemn seas,
Wise with the wisdom of desire to know —
And be in harmony with truth her life
Was given to verify, from an Unseen
Full-trusted source; sagacious with a rare
Sagacity of heart that glad re-gave,
Withholding nought — instinctive, confident;
Seeking no strange inventions of its own,
By shame or perfidy forever pained.

Though realms of intellect her kingdoms were,
Native of gracious alien ways she roved,
Nor gallant revelries nor smiling scenes
Her gay election coveted in vain.

Soldier of France, Lover of Life, all hail!
Never was lily on a field of gold
More dazzling than the true presentment of
Your soul!
And as the noblest led the way,
Just as the truest loyal gave their best —
Their dearest — each for all — we gave, and give
Our friend, who was and is, and always must
Be Life! Though military honors crown
Her mortal end — our flag triumphant drape
Her round — France cradle her soft dreamless sleep,
Her sister snowdrops in her gentle hand —
The name Sedan link hers with legend grim
Of the illustrious dead, Time never did
And never can efface — yet here, to-night,
Down these calm streets of home, where these old trees
Stooped over her to bless her as she passed
Beneath, on village industries intent,
A dancing to-and-fro of girlish quests —
On flying feet, with out-flung hand to greet —
She never can seem one of Death's pale host!
To us she lives, and with us walks the day,
The sunlight burnishing her gleaming hair,
And as the children troop from school, we see
In fancy little ones she fed and cheered,

With that right royal cheer of hers, in France.
And when the West plays out its sunset masque
Of crimson standards, golden banners flung
To heaven, we shall re-dream the soldier's dream
Of victory — she smiling back at us
From their resurgent, unsundered ranks.
And as our own return — God rest the lads
Who come not! — while we sing, and praise their deeds,
How near her radiant spirit leans o'er these
She served, forgetting self in blessedness
Of some great little service given them
In pain or hunger or sore need of love —
Till we shall be left wondering at last,
If somewhere these young veterans of ours
May crave her own angelic presence still,
Her own restoring and sustaining smile —
The mere glad aureola of her hair —
A radiance more débonnaire than that
Old angels shed on such young companies?
To what citation does she move with them?
To what promotion of serene reward,
Where Jeanne, Edith Cavell and all who took
That high-road of the unreturning young
Salute her, one of their *Found* Legion bright?

Catching the rising echo of her song,
The rhythm of her freed spirit's forward march,
The glory of her joyous pressing on
To what in some next sphere comes next for her —
Would we prolong her spent humanity?
Hold her to this death-haunted world of ours,
Drag off the wingéd sandals newly won,
To plod our mortal pace with us again?
Bid her to think her free celestial thoughts
In finite idiom?

Nay, Love forbid !

We trust the Power that brought her forth; accept
The omen of the Spring — nor doubt she pressed
To some undreamed, diviner happening.
So fast she lived, she loved life up ere noon,
Before the dew was off the day she sped —
Falsity figures her 'cut off' — would have
Her dwindle down to wan eternities.
What concourse has unstinted glee like hers
With the discreet and immemorial dead?
Now death is done for her.

Safely she passed,
Escorted by full regiments of youth,
Her ruddy comrades unto Life and Light.
And while there yet is right to do, or joy

To share, our soldier Maid is beckoning —
Waving a very blithe and tender Hail !
To us left here a while to 'carry on.'
While yet the mustered cohorts of the stars
Review their midnight legions on the sky,
While yet the gentian hides beneath the hills,
While vast and small pursue their timeless way,
No change shall mar her soul's integrity
And we may sleep and wake and strive, secure
That 'All is well' — rung by whatever bells
Of an unswerved, eternal reckoning.
We only greatly lose who greatly had,
Mysterious-flowered, to greatly find again,
How dare we question our Supreme Command?
How dare we fail our dauntless Champion,
Or blur her undimmed shield by mortal sigh?



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